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A N
E N Q U I R Y
Into the TIME of the
FIRST FOUNDATION
O F
Westminster Abbey.

As discoverable from the best AUTHORITIES
now remaining, both Printed and Manuscript.

To which is added

An Account of the WRITERS of the History of the
CHURCH.

By RICHARD WIDMORE, M. A.

Librarian to the Dean and Chapter of WESTMINSTER.

L O N D O N, -

Printed for J. STAGG in *Westminster-Hall*. 1743.
[Price One Shilling.]

ENQUIRY

INTO THE

WESTMINSTER ABBEY.

AND OF THE CHURCH OF THE HOLY TRINITY
AND OF THE CHURCH OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

IN THE CITY OF WESTMINSTER.



BY THE
HOUSE OF COMMONS.

LONDON.

Printed for J. S. and W. Whitaker, 1843.

By Order of the House of Commons.

TO THE

Right Reverend Father in GOD,

J O S E P H

Lord Bishop of ROCHESTER,

Dean of WESTMINSTER,

AND TO THE

CHAPTER of the Collegiate Church,

T H I S

E N Q U I R Y

Is Humbly Dedicated

By their much obliged

And most obedient Servant,

RICHARD WIDMORE.

THE

Right Reverend Father in GOD

JOSEPH

Lord Bishop of Rochester

Dean of WESTMINSTER

AND TO THE

CHAPTER of the Collegiate Church

THIS

ENQUIRY

is humbly Dedicated

By their much obliged

And most obedient servant

RICHARD WIDMORE

P R E F A C E.

IF any one should think, that the Author of this Enquiry ought, as Judge *Hale* did by a Piece he published, to have entituled it, * *Difficiles Nugæ*; with that Person, he will not contend; he doth acknowlege, that, in this Case, the Truth is of more Difficulty to come at, than of Service to Mankind when discovered: However, Things of the like Nature, and rather curious than useful, are daily offered to the World, and also read by great Numbers of People. A good Part of

* *Difficiles Nugæ*, or, Observations touching the *Torricellian Experiment*, and the various Solutions of the same; especially touching the Weight and Elasticity of the Air, 8^{vo}, London, 1669.

what

P R E F A C E.

what is here observed came in the Writer's Way, and he could not well avoid the Remark-
ing it, as he was putting into Order the Charters and other Instruments and Papers in the Archives of the Church. It differs somewhat from what hath been hitherto made public on this Subject; and he imagines, it will, on Examination, be found to be nearer the Truth.

If any one should think, that the Author of this Enquiry ought, as Judge Hale did by a Piece he published, to have entitled it, *Difficultes Vagæ*; with that Person, he will not contend; he does acknowledge, that in this Case, the Truth is of more Difficulty to come at, than of Service to Mankind when discovered: However, Things of the like Nature, and rather curious than useful, are daily offered to the World, and also read by great Numbers of People. A good Part of

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 treating the various Solutions of the
 and Elasticity of the Air, &c. London, 1662.

what

both of which carry a very high Date. One is, That

AN
ENQUIRY
INTO THE

Time of the FIRST FOUNDATION of
WESTMINSTER ABBEY.

THE Beginning, or Time of the first Foundation, of many of our Religious Houses is very well known, either from the Charters of the Founders, or from cotemporary Historians: but this is the Case chiefly of Monasteries erected since the Conquest; as to the older ones, we are more in the dark. Several of these, it is true, had short Histories of their Foundations, or did produce some Charters to shew a very great Antiquity: but, as these Histories were plainly the Work of Persons, who lived too late to be proper Authorities in this Case, and, at the best, framed out of very uncertain Traditions; so, as to the Charters, the Matter was still worse, and they are many of them evidently Forgeries, as learned Men have proved in those of *Crowland* and some others.

There hath not, that I know of, been produced, in Behalf of *Westminster*, any Charter of its supposed first Founder; but it hath been pretended to be of very great Antiquity; and there are two Accounts of this Matter,

* See *Hicke's Dissertatio Epistolaris*, p. 66.

both

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both of which carry a very high Date. One is, That it was a *British* Foundation by King *Lucius*, about the Year of our Lord 184, and that the Church, so built here, was afterwards, in the Persecution in *Dioclesian's* Time, taken from the Christians and turned into an Heathen Temple of *Apollo*. This is asserted by a Writer in the *Saxon* or *Old English* Language, quoted by *John Flete*, who wrote the History of this Place about the Year 1443, and who himself follows the same Opinion; as likewise by the Author of the History ascribed to *John Brompton*^b.

But we need not, I think, spend much Time in examining this Opinion: To say nothing of its being against all good History, that a *British* Prince should then reign in this Part of our Island, or also of the Improbability, that a Christian Church could be publicly erected in the Middle of a *Roman* Heathen Province, or of the still greater Absurdity of a Monastery, long before there were any Monks; the very Being of such a Prince, as King *Lucius*, here, is generally and very justly exploded; since it hath been discovered, that Venerable^c *Bede*, on whose Authority alone that King had so long subsisted, hath taken what he says concerning this Prince from the^d *Liber Pontificalis*, whose Author was certainly not at all acquainted with the State of our Island at that Time, and which Book is very justly called by our late learned^e Bishop of *Worcester*, *Lloyd*, "a Mixen of ill contrived Forgeries."

^b See the *Decem Scriptores*, *London* p. 117. and *Schelestrate De antiquis Roman. Pontificum Catalogis*, Cap. 7. § 3.

^c *Ecclesiastical History*, Book i. Chap. 4.

^d See *Pearson's Opera Posthuma*, of Church Government, 8^{vo}, 1684.

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The other, and more general Opinion is, that it was first founded in the Time of King *Sebert* and of *Mel-litus* Bishop of *London*, and in one of the following Years, ^f 604, ^s 605, or ^h 610.

The oldest Historian concerning this Matter, or, at least, that hath come to my Knowledge, and whose Book is now in being, is ⁱ *Sulcardus*, who, by the Dedication of his Work to Abbot *Vitalis*, could not be later than the latter Part of the Conqueror's Reign; for *Vitalis* certainly died some time before that Prince.

When I say, that *Sulcardus* is the oldest Authority for *Westminster Abbey's* being founded in the Time of King *Sebert*, I do not forget, that there are Charters in the Names of King *Edgar*, Archbishop *Dunstan*, and *Edward* the Confessor, published from the ^k *Cottonian*, Lord *Hatton's*, and Sir *Henry Spelman's* Libraries, and from the Archives of the Church of *Westminster*, which either mention or imply a Foundation here in the Reign of that Prince: But as to these Charters, that of ⁱ King *Edgar* hath been proved to be spurious, from the Style and Phrases in it, which were brought hither by the *Normans*, and never used here before the Conquest; that of Saint ^m *Dunstan*, both from the same Reason, and likewise from the many Inconsistencies in Chronology; and those of the ^a Confessor, from the many *Norman* Phrases also in them, and from the Manner of affixing the Seals to them. With respect

^f *Monast. Angl.* Vol. I. p. 55. *Monasticon*, Vol. I. p. 59. *Spelman's Concilia*, Vol. I.

^s *Stow and Cambden.*

^h *Newcourt's Repertorium*, Vol. I. p. 710. *Willis of Mitred Parliamentary Abbots.* ⁱ *Hickes's Dissertatio Epistolari*, p. 66.

^m *Wharton, De Episcop.* Lond. p. 79.

^a *Cottonian Library, Faustina*, A 79.

3. *Titus*, A 8. ^a *Hickes's Preface to Literatura*

^k *Reyneri Apostolatus*, p. 66. *Septentrionalis*, p. 37, 38.

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to these last Charters, there might, if there was Occasion for it, be added, as a farther Proof, the great Difference between them and a Charter of the *Confessor's*, undoubtedly genuine, which, as it is very short and hath not as yet been published, I have subjoined to this Enquiry.

That I may conceal nothing relating to this Matter, there is likewise, in a Book belonging to the Church, a Transcript, about the Time of *Queen Mary*, of a Charter of the *Confessor's*, mentioning the Consecration of the Church by *St. Peter* himself, which hath not, as far as I know, been published or taken notice of by any Person, and in which the Marks of Fraud are not so obvious; but yet I do not believe it genuine: however, that every one may use his Judgment concerning it, I have put it into the *Appendix*.

Besides these Charters, there is in a *Latin History* of this Church of *Westminster* (ascribed in *Dugdale's Monasticon* to *Richard Sporley*; but mentioned by *Usher*, more truly, as the Work of *John Flete*) a Chapter from a nameless *Saxon* Author; the Original of which not being now to be found, there is no Judgment to be made of his Age, from the Language; but, from his Manner of relating the Thing, he should be later than *Sulcardus*, as having, which we before mentioned, the Story of a Church built here by King *Lucius*, and afterwards converted into an Heathen Temple of *Apollo*; of which Particulars *Sulcardus* hath nothing, it being a Custom with our Monkish Historians; for the succeeding ones to add new Circumstances and more Particulars to what they found in preceeding Authors.

° From the Archives of the Church of *Westminster*. See *Appendix*, N° I.
P N° II.

A 2 Vols. I. p. 55.
Britan. Eccles. Antiquitates, p. 299.

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I repeat it then, that *Sulcardus*, in the Conqueror's Time, or about the Year 1080, is the oldest Author now remaining, for the Abbey's being first built in the Reign of King *Sebert*. This Historian doth not, indeed, name the Founder; he only calls him *Quidam Civium Urbis non infimus*, and *Prædices Christicola*: and I observe, that in the oldest Manuscript of his History, "*Saberctus Subregulus London*," is no more than a Marginal Note, added by the Transcriber of *Sulcardus*, and who, in all likelihood, was some Monk of the Abbey; from whence, in Time, it crept into the Text.

Not long after *Sulcardus*, viz. between the Years 1120 and 1130, *William of Malmsbury* mentions this Monastery, as founded by Bishop *Mellitus*; and a little while after him, in the Year 1163, *Ailred* Abbot of *Rievall* ascribes it to King *Sebert*: since which Time down to the present, that Prince is by all, or almost all Authors mentioned as the Founder.

To this, and to make the History appear more plausible, one of our late Writers, of great Skill in our Ecclesiastical Antiquities, hath observed, ingeniously enough, that this Monastery was founded at that Time, in pursuance of a Design of Pope *Gregory the Great*, to be a Seminary of Persons brought up in the Way of Devotion and Learning, as a Nursery for the *East-Saxon Church*.

But to all this there is this great Objection, namely, That Venerable *Bede* is entirely silent in this Matter: he mentions, in his *Ecclesiastical History*, Book ii. Chap. 3. the Founding of the Cathedral of *St. Paul*

^o *Cotton Library, Faustina, A. 7.* ^x *Inter Decem Scriptores, col.*

^t *De Gestis Pontificum, Lib. iii.* ³⁸⁵

^u *Chron. Joh. Abbatis Petroburg.* ^v *Stillingsfleet of the True Anti-*

P. 79. *quity of London, Vol. III, p. 95.*

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by King *Ethelbert*; but he hath not, either there or elsewhere, one Word concerning *Westminster*: And is it likely, that *Bede*, who was himself a Monk, and also had a very great Opinion of the Monastic State, esteeming it as the highest Perfection of the Christian Life; who moreover had several ^a Materials for his History from *Albinus* Abbot of St. *Austin's* in *Canterbury*, and from *Nothelmus*, afterward Archbishop of *Canterbury*, but at that Time a Presbyter of *London*; and in particular, by what Persons, and in what Princes Reigns, Christianity was planted, as in other Kingdoms, so also in that of the *East-Saxons*; and who likewise hath mentioned the Founding of many of our Monasteries, and among the rest those of ^a *Chertsea* and *Berkyng*, by *Erkenwald* Bishop of *London*: I say, is it likely, that *Bede* should not know of *Westminster*, if in being in his Time, or not make mention of it, and when he had so fair an Occasion too, if he knew of it?

Farther, and to strengthen this Objection, I add, that there are yet remaining in the Archives of the Church two old Charters, one of King *Offa* the *Mer-
cian*, in the Year 785, and the other of King *Edgar*, about the Year 960; and these also have nothing concerning the Foundation of the Church by King *Sebert*, or in his Time: tho', as I conceive, it would not have been improper, that the Thing should have been mentioned in them, had it been true in Fact: and it was thought so, as to the latter, by the Monks of *Westminster*; for they have foisted into an old Transcript of King *Edgar's* Charter a Clause of the Dedication of the Church by St. *Peter* himself; which supposes it to have been founded at that Time. — These two Charters, as

^a See the Preface to his *Ecclesiastical History*.

^a *Ecclesiastical History*, Book iv. Chap. 6.

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I take them, and especially that of *Offa*, to be genuine, and as no Person hath yet published them, I have added in the ^b *Appendix*.

As to the Remark of our great *Stillingsfleet*, which I mentioned above, *viz.* That not only Churches, but also Monasteries for Seminaries of Churchmen, were, according to the Design of Pope *Gregory*, founded by the first Planters of Christianity here among the *Saxons*: that may be true of Buildings adjoining to, and Communities of Men employed in the Service of Cathedrals, but not of distant and separate Foundations; and I think his Authorities prove so much, and no more; what is now the Quire, or the Chapter, of St. *Paul's*, being in them, several times, called *Monasterium Sancti* or *Beati c Pauli*.

And having thus, tho' unwillingly, set aside King *Sebert*, or any Person in his Time, from being, according to the received Opinion, the first Founder of this Church, I would now offer my own Conjecture concerning this Point; and it is this, That it was founded about the Time when *Bede* died, or between the Years 730 and 740. Now this is great Antiquity, tho' it doth not come up to the common Opinion, by the Space of 120 or 130 Years.

And I am induced to think, that it must be so old, and not any thing later, from the Date of King *Offa's* Charter, *viz.* in the Year 785, which mentions the Monastery, as a Place known at that Time, and gives the Name of the Abbot, *viz.* *Ordbrihtus*. Now, where I put the Time of the Foundation is but fifty Years before; a shorter Space than which, we cannot, I think, well assign to it.

^b N^o III, IV.

^c *Antiquity of London*, Vol. III.

p. 925, 926, 927.

Besides,

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Besides, that was an Age fruitful of Monasteries in this Kingdom, the Devotion of those Times running much into such Foundations.

The Name or Person of the first Founder, for want of Historians relating to those Times, we must, I suppose, be content to be ignorant of: only, as to his Condition of Life, there is Reason to imagine, that he was not any King, or Person of the highest Consideration.—*Sulcardus* acknowledges, that it was originally but a small^a Church. I observe likewise, that when *St. Dunstan*, after it had been ruined by the *Danes*, repaired it, and furnished it again with Monks, he made it only a little^c Monastery for twelve Monks; which, had it been originally a large Place, his Zeal for Monastery, and his great Power at that Time, would, I believe, never have endured, but he would have restored it in a Manner equal to its first Foundation.—I add to this, that there is a Treatise in the *Saxon* Language, written about the Time of the *Norman* Conquest^f, concerning such Saints as were buried up and down in *England*, and that there is hardly a Monastery of any Note at that Time, but what is said to have had one or more of the Bodies of such Saints; only, none are assigned to *Westminster*: which, had it been of such antient Erection, or founded by so considerable a Person as King *Sebert*, would not, I apprehend, have been the Case, but it must have come in for a Share.

Who the Persons were, that first ascribed the Foundation of this Place to King *Sebert*, or to some Person in his Time, it is easy to conceive; namely, the Monks of *Westminster*: they found, in the History of *Bede*, the Names of King *Ethelbert*, and of *Sebert* and

^a *Ecclesia non adeo magna.*

^c *Malmfbury*, p. 141.

^f *Hicke's Dissertatio Epistolaris*, p. 117.

Mellitus,

Mellitus, as the first Planters of Christianity here among the *East-Saxons*, and they added the rest, as conducive to the Honour of the Place, from their own Invention. But at what Time, precisely, they did this, or, again, which depends on the Resolution of the former Question, with what particular View this was done by them, I cannot exactly tell.

There are but three Periods of Time assignable, with any Probability, for this, *viz.* either the Reign of King *Edgar*, or that of *Edward* the Confessor, or else the Time presently after the *Norman* Conquest.

As to the Reign of *Edgar*, tho' *St. Dunstan*, who at that Time ordered every thing in Church Matters, and either himself, and by his own immediate Direction, repaired, or persuaded the King to give Orders for the repairing this Monastery, which had been ravaged by the *Danes*, and was then in Ruins; tho' this Person, I say, who was both brought up a Monk himself, and also an excessive Favourer of Monks, did many unjustifiable Things, to turn out the secular and married Clergy, and to introduce Monks every where; yet we do not find, in any Author, that the forging of Histories, as well as Miracles, was the Invention of that Time.

As to King *Edward* the Confessor, to whom this Place owed its first Grandeur and Magnificence, as he was a pious and devout, so withal a very weak and credulous Person; and this Story might probably enough be invented to induce him the more readily to bestow his Munificence upon it, by creating in him an high

Nota est Dunstani. in clerum rit, ut nuptiarum licentiam, illis conjugatum rabies, quot machinas ad-torqueret. Wharton. Ang. Sacra, bibuerit, quot portenta commentus fue- Vol. II. p. 3.

Vene-

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Veneration for it, on account of its Antiquity and the
Manner of its Consecration.

With respect to the Time just after the Conquest ;
the *Normans*, we find, were too apt to make free with
the Lands and Privileges of the *Saxon* Monasteries, and
moreover the Monks might be afraid of the Conquer-
or ; for tho' he was crowned here, and professed the
highest Regard to the Memory of the Confessor, the
late Founder, and tho' likewise he bestowed in Ex-
change upon this Place several Estates, and is praised by
^b *Malmsbury* for his Bounty to it, yet the ⁱ Estates he
took away were, I think, of equal Worth, or rather
more valuable than those he gave to it. Moreover, he
was a Person arbitrary and violent enough in his Pro-
ceedings, and not subject to be very scrupulous in the
means he used for his Purposes : they might therefore i-
magine, that the Belief of this Church's being so antient
and consecrated in so miraculous a manner might be
a proper method to keep this Prince in a good mind
toward it, and to occasion him, if not to encrease his
Kindness, yet, at least, to forbear the doing it any In-
jury.

Which of these two, I say, was the particular Time
when, and the particular Reason why this was done,
I do not pretend certainly to know : either of them
was sufficient to cause the Monks here to fall in with a
Practice too general in that Age ; and it was as easy
for them to invent Histories, as a little while after-
wards to forge Charters, several of which do still re-
main in the Archives of the Church.

Such Forgery, tho' it be an ugly Charge against any,
whether single Persons or Bodies of Men, yet the thing,

^b *Extulit locum magnis redditibus
prediorum.* Malmsbury, f. 134.

ⁱ *Windsor and half Rutland.*

in this Case, is too manifest to be denied or doubted of; and the Monks of *Westminster* were not alone in such Practices; it was a general Thing, and the Fault of the Times: and it is said in mitigation of it, that the *Norman*^k Conquerors made it as it were necessary, by disregarding the old *Saxon* Charters of Lands and Privileges, and reducing the Monks to the hard Condition of either losing what belonged to them, or defending it by forged Instruments in *Latin*. But when Persons give themselves Leave to defend even a good Title by undue means, they seldom know where to stop, and the Success at first emboldens them to enlarge beyond all Reason. And tho' I do not think, that in this Practice the whole was Fiction and Invention, they only added what they imagined would more especially serve their Purpose; yet by this means they have destroyed the Certainty of History, and left those who come after them no better Help, in separating the Truth from Fables, than Conjecture and not altogether improbable Supposition.

The Sum of what I have been advancing is this: That the Account, that *Westminster Abbey* was first built either by King *Sebert*, or by any Person in his Time, hath no manner of Support from such early Authorities, as it was proper enough it should have been mentioned by, had it been really true; and that the only plausible Reason for such Account is grounded on a mistake: That the first Authors, now known to have delivered this Account, lived too late to be allowed as competent Vouchers in this Case, viz. at the least 450 Years after the Time assigned, and that they do not agree among themselves as to the Person of the Founder: That likewise there were strong Reasons both from Interest and the Pra-

^k *Nicolson's Historical Library*, Vol. I. p. 110.

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stice of these Times when I suppose the Story was first made, to induce the Monks of *Westminster* not to be content with such an early Foundation for their Monastery as it actually had, but to assign to it the very earliest they could think of, and to make and invent Histories for this Purpose, as their Successors did some time afterwards forge Charters on a like Occasion, to support a Claim to Privileges and an Exemption from *Episcopal* Jurisdiction.

APPENDIX.

A P P E N D I X.

I.

Charter of Liberties in Saxon, with a Latin Translation.

✠. **E**ADWARD cinze **E**ADWARDUS Rex,
 7 pett pell mine Saluto meos episco-
 ber 7 mine eoplar 7 pos, et meos comites, et
 ealle mine þegnar on þam omnes meos ministros in
 rcipan ðær sancte Pe- illis comitatibus, ubi san-
 ter haraþ land anne 7 ctus Petrus et abbas Ead-
 Eadwine abb. ppeondlice. winus habent terram, be-
 7 ic kyþe eop þ ic habbe nevole. Et ego edico vo-
 7egiren him raca 7 bis, quod dedi illi 1 faca
 rocne. toll 7 team. 7riþ- et socne, telonium et fer-
 bñice 7 hamrocne 7 ro- vorum suorum propagi-
 ner teal. anne tid 7 ut nem, pacis infractionem,
 of tid. binnan buph 7 et domus invasionem, et
 butan. rpa pull 7 rpa mercatus interceptionem,
 kopð. rpa hit meýlvan in festo et extra festum, in
 on handa 7tod. 7 ic nelle burgo et extra, tam plene et

These are Saxon Names of Privileges, for which Law Dictiona-
 ries may be consulted. I have not translated them, because learn-
 ed Men are not fully agreed about their Signification.

geþarían þæt æn man libere quam egomet ipse ha-
 habbe ænne onrync o- bui. Et nolo ut liceat, quod
 rēp hīr lande, ne oþer quivis homo habeat jus im-
 hīr men be rþande ne ponendi aliquod in illius
 be lande butan re abb terram vel illius homines,
 to þar mynryþer neode, five in littore five in ter-
 . ƿob eop ge healbe. ra, nisi ipse Abbas, ad hu-
 jus Monasterii usum.

Deus vos conservet.

II.

INonomate summi Kyriou omnia jura regnorum gu-
 bernantis, et ab alto coeli fastigio cuncta cernen-
 tis, ego Eadwardus rex, pollens hierarchus, tota mentis
 intentione rimabar de statu imperii mei, quibus admi-
 niculis stabiliri regnum potuerit, et munitum diu fer-
 vari. Sed cum hoc dictando scrutabar, ardebat mihi in a-
 nimo illud quod Psalmigraphus vates ait, "Nisi Domi-
 nus custodiat civitatem, in vanum vigilant qui custo-
 diunt eam." Ejus videlicet protectione munitus, qui
 tam coelestem quam terrenam civitatem custodit et ip-
 sam regit, omnibus qui volunt pie vivere in Christo
 prodesse satago, et eorum dignitatem augere et augen-
 do defensare. Quapropter renovare studui leges et de-
 creta patrum meorum, admonitione scilicet Eadfini ar-
 chiepiscopi, et Oelfrici archiepiscopi, et aliorum optima-
 tum meorum. Nos quoque paterno regno potiti remi-
 niscentes de sacris locis, quomodo vastati sunt post
 mortem patrum meorum, inter talia et alia perplura in
 memoriam

memoriam habui, quomodo ipsa prædicta emendarem. Resolutum est coram me, et recitatum de terribili loco, qui vulgo ab incolis Westmynster nuncupatur, qualiter avus meus Eadgarus et Dunstanus archiepiscopus, et postea Ethelredus pater meus renovavit suam pristinam libertatem. Idcirco nos, pro modulo nostro præfato monasterio augmentantes, hoc privilegium scriptitare mandavimus; ne forte (quod absit!) quis tyrannica deceptus potestate vim famulis Dei inibi degentibus inferre conetur. Credimus vero ut post finem dierum meorum lites crebrescere et omnia mala ebullire. Hanc largitatem ideo benigno animo renovamus, et concedimus sancto Petro, (ⁿ principi Apostolorum, cui locus prædictus dedicatus ac consecratus mirabiliter ab antiquis temporibus Dei providentia ab ipso Clavigero fuit confirmatus) ut ab omni seculari servitute in perpetuum sit liber: et ut ne quis præsentium vel magis futurorum ambiget quæ sit illa libertas, quam amabiliter et firmiter concedo: omnimodis cuncta illius monasterii possessio nullis sit unquam gravata oneribus, scilicet nec expeditione, nec pontis et arcis ædificamine, nec juris regalis fragmine, nec furis apprehensione, et ideo, ut omnia simul comprehendam, nil debet exsolvi vel regis præposito, vel episcopi, vel ducis, vel ullius hominis, sed omnia debita exsolvant jugiter, qui in ipsa dominatione fuerint, ad supradictum sanctum locum, secundum quod ordinaverit abbas qui ipso præfuerit coenobio. Hanc ergo libertatem, ammonitione episcoporum meorum, scilicet Stigandi, Ealredi, Leofrici, meo abbati Eadwino, qui tunc temporis eidem monasterio præfuit, placabili mentis devotione dictare, scribere, commendare procuravi. Hoc vero decretum

ⁿ The same Words with the Clause foisted into King *Edgar's* Charter.

præfato

præfato sancto ^a illa nobis libenter concessum taliter confirmari, servari decrevimus, ut non audeat quis infringere nostrum decretum et stabilem libertatem quam decrevimus, nisi ad constructionem Monasterii solummodo administretur. Si autem hanc nostram donationem, inspirante Deo, amplificare quis aut augere decreverit, augeatur ei in hoc seculo felicitas ac prosperitas, et in futuro cœtibus angelicis jungi mereatur in ævum, ut vocem Christi valeat audire ita dicentis, “ Venite, benedicti Patris mei, “ percipite regnum quod vobis paratum est.” Si autem (quod absit!) quis filius perditionis hoc nostrum decretum, suadente Diabolo, infringere aut mutare conatus fuerit, sciat se ab ipso Clavigero, cui Dominus potestatem tradiderit ligandi, solvendi que, ejectum et gehennalibus incendiis traditum una cum Jûda traditore retrusum et conligatum, nisi ante diem exitus sui emendaverit.

Rura etiam ejusdem monasterii, qualiter acquisita sint, hic notare non omittimus : hoc est, primitus circa illud monasterium xvii. mansas et dimidium; in Heandune xx. in Hamstede v. in Grenpforde xii. in Hanawylle viii. in Sceapertune v. in Sunnabyrig vii. in Coslea ii. in Bricandune v. in Ealdenham x. in Dacceweorthe et in Wattune v. in Holewylle vi. in Kynleo-fedene v. in Fentune iv. in Mordune x. et in Oewylle ii. in Pereham vii. in Syllingtune iv. in Cyllingtune iv. in Hamme vi. in Winigtune iii.

Hæc sunt nuncupata ipsius telluris, quæ inibi fuerunt, antequam ædificarem fundamenta ejusdem præfati loci. Hæc sunt terræ quas milites mei dederunt pro animabus eorum, me præsentem, Christo et sancto Petro ad præfatum locum. Hoc est, Leosefeld Mulesham cum omnibus ad se pertinentibus, et Egelric Kylewendum cum omnibus ad se pertinentibus, et

^a Loco.

Wulfwine Mapoldrestede cum omnibus ad se pertinentibus, et Guthmund Kynleofedene, et Roeline, et Læcendune cum omnibus ad se pertinentibus, et Aelfric Wanstede, cum omnibus ad se pertinentibus, et Ingulph Paclesham cum omnibus, ad se pertinentibus, et Atsere Swearte Ligetun cum omnibus ad se pertinentibus, et Tostig Cleagate cum omnibus ad se pertinentibus, et Atfese Leofne cum omnibus ad se pertinentibus, et Bricfige Icceweortha cum omnibus ad se pertinentibus, et Wulstan Denham cum omnibus ad se pertinentibus, et Siward Monachus dimidiam hydum ad Agmondesham, et aet Weodune ane hide.

Et posteaquam ædificata erat et Deo dedicata illa sancta Ecclesia, nos itaque pro spe retributionis æternæ, et pro absolutione et remissione delictorum meorum, ad laudem nominis Domini et ad honorem sancti Petri principis Apostolorum, regali dignitate donavimus has terras, quæ hic karraxantur. Imprimis Stana cum omnibus ad se pertinentibus, pascuis, pratis, rivulisque aquarum; et Windlesforam cum omnibus ad se pertinentibus, et Hwathamstede cum omnibus ad se pertinentibus, et Stithenace cum omnibus ad se pertinentibus, et Aescfeswyllan cum omnibus ad se pertinentibus, et Den cum omnibus ad se pertinentibus, et Suthburh cum omnibus ad se pertinentibus, et Githslepe cum omnibus ad se pertinentibus, et Langtun cum omnibus ad se pertinentibus, et Pertun cum omnibus ad se pertinentibus, et Roteland cum omnibus ad se pertinentibus, post mortem Edgithæ reginæ uxoris suæ; et Perscoram cum omnibus ad se pertinentibus, et Deorhyrste cum omnibus ad se pertinentibus.

Peracta est ergo hæc Cartula dominicæ incarnationis anno millesimo LXV. indictione iii. his testibus consentientibus quorum nomina hic infra habentur.

✠. Ego

- ✠. Ego EADWARDUS rex totius Britannia præfatam hanc Cartulam cum sigillo sanctæ Crucis regali stabilimento affirmavi.
- ✠. Ego EADGYTH ejusdem Regis conlaterana hanc regalem confirmationem gaudenter stabilivi.
- ✠. Ego STIGANDUS archiepiscopus triumphalem agicæ crucis tropheum huic regiæ affirmationi gaudenter impressi.
- ✠. Ego EALREDUS archiepiscopus hanc territoriam schedulam signo sanctæ crucis diligenter adsignare curavi.
- ✠. Ego LEOFRICUS episcopus consolidavi.
- ✠. Ego WILLELMUS episcopus coadunavi.
- ✠. Ego HEREMANNUS episcopus corroboravi.
- ✠. Ego WULFIUS episcopus confirmavi.
- ✠. Ego HAROLD Dux.
- ✠. Ego EADWINE Dux.
- ✠. Ego GYRTH Dux.
- ✠. Ego LEOFWINE Dux.
- ✠. Ego ESGAR Minister.
- ✠. Ego BONDIG Minister.
- ✠. Ego RADULPH Minister.
- ✠. Ego RODBEARD Minister.

III.

IN nomine Domini summi Salvatoris mundi. Solus ille rex seculari de potestate regimen recte disponit, qui terrenis ac caducis cœlestia comparare conatur præmia. Iccirco ego Offa, divina dispensante pietate

pietate, monarchia Mercienſis regni munitus, pro amore omnipotentis Dei in memoria æterna, dedi ſancto Petro et plebi Domini degenti in Torneia in loco terribili, quod dicitur æt Weſtmunſter quandam partem terræ, id eſt, decem Caſſatorum, ubi ſolicoli clamare ſueſcunt æt Aldenham, cum omnibus aptis uſibus, pratis, paſcuis, piſcariis, ſilvis, ſilvarum denſitatibus, cunctiſque neceſſariis utilitatibus, ut habeant in propriam poteſtatem perpetualiter concedens donavi. Accepto quoque ab eccleſiæ ejuſdem abbate Ordbrihtio placabili pretio C. mancuſas auri obrizi in una armilla.

Jam ſequitur iſtius ruris circyrate terminatio.

Æperƿ upp of colen ea æt ðæpe lange hegge ænde earƿ into heiden up to boipic. ꝥnam boipic to ꝥam cupe. ꝥnam ꝥam cupe into ꝥam midbelan ðepe ƿƿete. Andlang ƿƿete into hilce ƿloð. ꝥnam hilcen ƿloð to tiðulƿer tƿeop. ꝥnam tiðulƿer tƿeop to hærelhƿƿte gate. ꝥnam ꝥanon to ꝥam ƿulengate. ðanon into ꝥam ƿertheale. ƿƿa to buleðe heige. ꝥnam buleðe heige to lƿebyrge. ƿƿa ðanon into cealbenlea and ƿƿa eƿƿ into colen ea be midelen ƿƿeame.

Hanc autem donationem ſi quis, face Demonis ſubpoſitus, aliquibus maculis turpare, frangere, minuere, auferre fatagerit, ſciat ſe de ſupernis pulſu Demonum in ima cadendum, niſi prius hic ad emendationem venire maluerit. Anno Dominicæ incarnationis DCCCLXXXV. acta eſt hæc præfata donatio ſub horum teſtimonio quorum nomina flaveſcunt infra.

✠ Ego OFFA rex Merciorum hanc elemoſinam, Deo donante, cum ſigno ſanctæ crucis confirmo.

✠ Ego Lȳneðſȳð regina ſigens crucem ✠ gaudenter conſignavi.

D

✠ Ego

- ✠ Ego LAMBERT *Archiepiscopus commodum duxi.*
- ✠ Ego HEADERED *Episcopus.*
- ✠ Ego UTTEL *Episcopus.*
- ✠ Ego EADBERT *Dux.*
- ✠ Ego ESNE *Dux.*
- ✠ Ego EATA *Dux & regis discifer consensu.*
- ✠ Ego BRORDA *Dux.*
- ✠ Ego CENWULF *Minister.*
- ✠ Ego EALHELM *Minister.*

Matthew Paris, in his Book of the Lives of the Abbots of *St. Alban's*, makes great Complaint against some Abbots of *Westminster*, as if they, under Pretence at first of becoming Tenants, had got into Possession, and then cheated the Convent of *St. Alban's* of the Manor of *Aldenham*, to which it of Right belonged. Now, if this is believed, as related by that Historian, it may affect the Credit of this Charter of King *Offa*, and, in consequence, what I from this Charter have advanced concerning the Time when *Westminster* was first founded.

I answer therefore, that there was a Law Suit between the two Monasteries concerning this Estate at *Aldenham*; and *Matthew Paris* himself doth not deny, but that *St. Alban's* lost the Cause: now Losers usually complain. Besides, the Charter I produce hath no marks of Fraud, that I can discover: it is written in the Hand of those Times; and if any Person curious in Antiquities will give himself the Trouble to examine it, it shall be shewed to him readily and without any Difficulty. I would also add, that it appears by the *Domesday Survey*, that this Ma-
nor

APPENDIX.

ff

nor did at that Time, and for some time before, belong to the Church of *Westminster*.

IV.

✠ **A**Nno ab incarnatione Domini nostri Jesu Christi ° dcccc li. Ego Eadgar, divina al-
lubescente gra[tia, rex et] primicharius totius Albio-
nis, ruris quandam particulam quinis ab accolis æ-
stimatam man[suiculis, ad] ecclesiam beati Petri a-
postoli, quæ sita est in nominatissimo loco, qui dici-
tur Westmynster, libenter [admodum] largitus sum.
Eo tenore quatinus nemo nostrorum successorum hoc
decretum nostrum sine [ira omnipotentis] Dei audeat
violare. Hæc particula terræ priscis temporibus
ad eandem [perhibetur ecclesiam pertinere] sicut le-
gitur in antiquo Telligrapho libertatis, quam rex Offa
illi monasterio [dudum contulit, quando] ecclesiis

° Though Historians agree that *Edgar* did not come to the King-
dom, or any Part of it, before
the Year 957, yet this Charter is
not, from that Mistake in Chro-
nology, to be presently condemn-
ed as a Forgery; for both the
Phraze and Handwriting are plain-
ly of that Time; and there is no-
thing in the Substance and Mat-
ter of it, which can, I think, be
justly objected to: by some one
or other of which Marks most
Forgeries may be detected. But
whether the Scribe went by some

erroneous Account of Time, or
rather dcccc li be instead of
dcccc l+, the cross Stroke on
the i being omitted, or for
dcccc lxi, or dcccc lix, (if
Dunstan was Archbishop in this
last Year) the numerical Letter
x being left out, I do not know.
However, even if it be spurious,
yet it answers the Purpose for
which I produce it; there being
nothing in it, either of the early
Foundation, or the miraculous
Consecration of the Church.

per universas regiones Anglorum recuperativa privilegia ^p Wulfredo archiepiscopo hortante [scribere iul]sit. Hanc eandem libertatem præfatæ ecclesiæ sancti Petri ^q *principis apostolorum, cui locus prædictus dedicatus ac consecratus, mirabiliter ab antiquis temporibus Dei providentia ab ipso Clavigero fuit consecratus,* Dunstano commendavi archiepiscopo ad reparanda diruta pastoria ecclesiæ et instituta monasterii reformanda, quatinus iura illic monasticæ et regularis disciplinæ in posterum regulariter viventium observentur.

Empta est enim hæc donatio cxx. a[ureis solidis in] una armilla. Et hoc actum est in monasterio Glæstingbiri quæque his cingitur t[erritoriis].

Æ neƿt up oƿ temere andlang meƿleotes to pollene ƿtocce. ƿƿa on bulunga ƿenn. oƿ ðam ƿenne æƿt ðæn ealðan ðic to cƿorðe. oƿ cƿorðe upp andlang teoburƿan to ðæne ƿiðe heƿe ƿtƿæt. æƿter ðæne heƿe ƿtƿæt to ðæne ealðe ƿtoccene ƿc̅e Andƿear cƿƿiceau. ƿƿa innan Lundene ƿenn. Andlang ƿuð on temere on midðen ƿtƿeame. andlang ƿtƿemer be lanðe 7 be ƿtanðe. eƿt on meƿleotes.

^p This is either a Mistake of the Archbishop's Name, or inaccurately expressed: for King *Offa* died about the Year 795, and *Wul-*

fred was not Archbishop before 803.

^q The Clause inserted in the Copy, not in the Original.



A N

AN
ACCOUNT
OF THE
WRITERS
Of the HISTORY of
Westminster Abbey.

[illegible]

Westminster Abbey.

ACCOUNT

OF THE

WRITERS of the HISTORY of

WESTMINSTER ABBEY.

IF any single Church in this Kingdom deserves to have its particular History carefully and exactly written, *Westminster* is entitled to this, shall I call it, Honour or Labour, as much, perhaps more than any other. Should one take no notice of the Largeness of the Building, its remarkable Loftiness, and also, if I mistake not, Elegance in its Kind, as likewise the Regard the Nation hath expressed for it, by repairing it at the publick Expence; yet the Uses to which it hath been applied are special and distinguishing Things. The Coronation of our Kings, ever since the Conquest, is an Honour in which no other Church pretends any Right to a Share: and moreover it hath been the Burying-place of most of our Princes, especially since the last Rebuilding of it by King *Henry the Third*: to which we may well add the many and stately Monuments of Persons remarkable for

4 *An Account of the Writers of the History of*
for their high Birth, their Honours, their Offices, their
Valour, their Learning, or their Ingenuity.

What hath been hitherto done towards the History
of this Place, and by what Persons, or, at least, as
far as hath come to my Knowledge, is as follows.

The first Author is SULCARDUS, a Monk of this
Abbey, who, by the Dedication of his Book to Ab-
bot *Vitalis*, must have written in the Conqueror's
Time, *Vitalis* dying some time before that Prince. His
Treatise is very short, and near a third Part of it is taken
up with the fabulous Account of the Consecration of
the Church by the Apostle St. *Peter* himself. He doth
not seem to have done much more than to have turn-
ed what he found in a *Codex Memorialis* of the Church
from a plain and familiar into a more elegant Style.

The next after him is JOHN FLETE, who be-
came a Monk here about the Year 1421, and died
Prior of the Monastery in 1464. He wrote his Hi-
story at the Request of some of the Monks, and pro-
posed to bring it down to the Year 1443. The Book
which I have seen goeth no lower than 1386, and if
he carried it any farther, that Part is, I suppose, now
lost. As he had more Materials for an History, so his
Work is much larger than that of *Sulcardus*; and
those who have written of the Church since his Time
seem to have borrowed a great deal of what they have
from him. He sets down his Authorities as he found
them; but, as Criticism was not a Study in Request
in his Time, he neither doth, nor was, I suppose, able
to distinguish what in Antiquity was true and genuine
from Forgeries.

Besides these two, there is a third Person, RICHARD
SPORLEY, a Monk also here from about 1430 till
1490. His History is said to be in the *Cottonian Li-*
brary

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brary, *Claudius*, A 8. from whence the Beginning of it was printed in the *Monasticon*, Vol. I. p. 55, &c. but, upon Examination, this appears to be the very Work of *John Flete*; only the *Proœmium* is left out, and the Account of the first Abbots before *Wulfimus* enlarged.

There is likewise, in the same Manuscript, an Account of *John Esteney* Abbot here from 1474 to 1498, by JOHN FELIX, a Monk of *Westminster* in the Time of King *Henry* the Eighth.

JOHN SKELTON, a noted Poet in the Time of *Henry* the Eighth, is said by the late learned Bishop of *Derry*, * *Nicolson*, to have first collected the Epitaphs of our Kings, Princes, and Nobles, that lie buried at the Abbey Church of *Westminster*: but I apprehend this to be no otherwise true, than that, when he, to avoid the Anger of Cardinal *Wolsey*, had taken Sanctuary at *Westminster*, to recommend himself to *Islip* the Abbot at that Time, he made some Copies of Verses to the Memories of King *Henry* the Seventh and his Queen, and his Mother the Countess of *Richmond*, and perhaps some other Persons buried in this Church.

And this is all that I know of any Persons, who, before the Dissolution of the Abbey, have written on this Subject singly and by itself. There are some others, Writers of the History of *England*, who, being Monks of *Westminster*, may probably have interspersed in their more general Works several Matters relating to this Place. Besides what we meet with of this kind in MATTHEW of *Westminster*, whose History hath been printed several times, there are also JOHN BEAVER and RICHARD of *Circestre*, whose Histories, if I mistake not, remain yet in Manuscript.

6 *An Account of the Writers of the History of*

Of those who may be called modern, that is, since the Foundation by Queen *Elizabeth*, the first is Mr. CAMDEN, whose Book, under the Title of *Reges, Reginae, &c. in Ecclesia Collegiata beati Petri Westmonasterii sepulti*, hath had three Editions, in 1600, 1603, and 1606. To this is prefixed an Account of the Foundation of the Church and the several Rebuildings, as also of the Alterations in the Establishment down to his Time; but it is very short, consisting only of two Leaves. He could, without doubt, have given the World a full and accurate History of the Church, had he thought fit; but he was better employed; and the Public would have been no Gainer, to have had from him a just History of *Westminster*, and gone without the *Britannia*, or the *Annals of the Reign of Queen Elizabeth*.

The Person who next follows him is HENRY KEEP, whose Book, under the Title of *Monumenta Westmonasteriensia*, came out in 1683. He is said to have been very careful in taking the Inscriptions; but what he hath in the Beginning of his Book, relating to the History and Foundation of the Church, discovers no great Accuracy or Exactness.

In the Year 1711, one I. C. a Doctor of Physick, published *The Antiquities of St. Peter's, or the Abbey Church of Westminster*. This Author, I have been informed, was employed by Booksellers, and wrote for Bread. He hath nothing new or particular in his Work; and his Book is taken from others, chiefly from *Keep*. It hath since been published in two Volumes.

Near the same time with the last mentioned Person, HENRY TURNER employed himself in compiling a *Survey of the City of Westminster*. This Man's natural Parts were very good; he was also very diligent in

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in making Enquiries relating to his Subject, and he had collected a great deal; But he had no Learning, and understood only *English*, and was not, in many Cases, able to distinguish between Truth and Falshood; and tho' he hath in his Book, which was never published, an Account of the Abbots, and several Things relating to the Officers and other Buildings of the Abbey; yet he purposely omits the History of the Church itself, only wishing, that it might be written by the next mentioned Person,

CHARLES BATTELY, lately the Receiver of the Church, who had both Abilities equal to such a Work and also the best Opportunities; and he had begun something of this kind; but he, I believe, had finished nothing, when he died; and I cannot learn what is become of even that which he left behind him.

The last Author I know of is JOHN DART. This Man consulted the *Cottonian* Library; he likewise either had access to the Records of the Church, or else several of them were communicated to him; he also had some farther Assistance from the before mentioned Mr. Battely; and his Book is a pompous Work in two Volumes in *Folio*, adorned with Cuts: but he seems to have had a greater Genius for Poetry than Antiquities, or he was in too much Haste; of this I am certain, that, both in the Historical Part and also in his Translations, he is very inaccurate, there being hardly a Page of his Work without Faults. He might have made a much better use of the Advantages he had.

There are in *Stow's Survey of London and Westminster*, in *Weaver's Funeral Monuments*, in *Sandford's Genealogical History*, in *Newcourt's Repertorium Ecclesiasticum Londinense*, in the *History of the Mitred Par-*

